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NEWS RELEASE

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CRAIG SUPPORTS VETS' HEALTH CARE PROPOSALS

Commissions testify before Senate VA Committee

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The Senate Veterans Affairs Committee heard testimony today from several commissions designed to improve the care our nation's veterans receive, including one co-led by former Senator Bob Dole and former Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna Shalala, (the President's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors). Idaho Senator Larry Craig, a member of the committee, had praise for a number of the proposals put forth by the commissions.

"I was extremely pleased to see the results that came out of these four commissions that testified today before the Committee," Craig said. "All of them highlighted very specific areas where we can make improvements in the care our veterans receive.

"However, the commissions' work to identify these areas is only the beginning," Craig continued. "Congress must continue to work with the Administration, DOD and VA to ensure that these changes are made, and made quickly, to streamline and improve the process of transition between DOD and VA.

"It is my hope that many of the recommendations made by the commissions, especially the Dole/Shalala Commission, can receive good bipartisan support and become enacted into law by the end of this Congress, if not by the end of this year."

Craig indicated he could support a number of proposals listed in the commission's recommendations which would:

- Ensure a seamless transition between DOD and VA for soldiers including transfer of electronic medical records, limiting the number of physical exams for purposes of awarding disability compensation.
- Revamp the DOD/VA ratings system to allow VA to control the disability rating system instead of competing or duplicative systems.
- Expand health services for families and caregivers of severely disabled veterans
- Expand the FMLA to provide more time for family members to care for their wounded soldiers, up to 6 months of leave.
- Create a system of Case Managers that will work with the wounded soldiers throughout the transition from DOD to VA.